

SB 23 - Add Licensed Professionals to Quality Educator Payment
Senator Lynda Moss

Testimony for Senate Education Committee
January 8, 2007

Background

In the special session in December 2005, the legislature created a new general fund component for school districts called a Quality Educator payment. The quality educator payment is an amount of \$2,000 per educator and is distributed to school districts and special education cooperatives based on the personnel assignments reported to the Office of Public Instruction each fall.

For the current year, districts received the quality educator payment for 12,179 FTE. This FTE count includes educators and licensed professionals who work in our public schools and special education cooperatives.

The list of licensed professionals includes audiologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, physical therapists, school nurses, and licensed professional counselors.

School districts and special education cooperatives also employ licensed social workers and licensed psychologists. It was an oversight in the drafting of SB 1 during the special session that these professionals were not included in the list of licensed professionals in 20-9-327.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that public schools provide related services by qualified individuals when the related service is necessary for the child to benefit from special education. Services such as transportation, speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy are fairly common. Occasionally, it is necessary to provide social work services or counseling services by a licensed psychologist. The need for counseling and social work services is more common for children with emotional disturbance than for other types of disabilities.

Proposal

SB 23, at the request of the Office of Public Instruction, proposes to add licensed social workers and licensed psychologists who are employed in the public school system to the list of licensed professionals who generate the quality educator payment under 20-9-327, MCA. OPI estimates that this will add 28.653 FTE statewide to the existing quality educator count of 12,179 FTE.

The ten school systems and three special education cooperatives that employ licensed social workers and licensed psychologists will benefit from this legislation:

School Districts: Bigfork, Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Harlowton, Helena, Missoula, Ronan, St. Ignatius, Trout Creek

Special Education Cooperatives: Bitterroot Valley Coop, Flathead County Coop, and Yellowstone/West Carbon County Coop

School Districts and Special Education Coops that would benefit from SB 23

List of staff assigned as psychologists and social workers that are not eligible for quality educator payment extracted from QE payment table on 12/14/2006.

TOTAL:				28.653
LE	Name	Assignment Code	Le	Actual FTE
0330	Bigfork Elem	SP24	0330	0.272
0331	Bigfork H S	SP24	0331	0.129
0965	Billings Elem	SP30	0965	3.800
0966	Billings H S	SP30	0966	2.700
9690	Bitterroot Valley Coop	SP30	9690	6.500
9690	Bitterroot Valley Coop	SP31	9690	0.500
0350	Bozeman Elem	SP30	0350	3.000
0350	Bozeman Elem	SP35	0350	0.500
9695	Flathead County Coop	SP24	9695	1.000
0098	Great Falls Elem	SP24	0098	0.900
0099	Great Falls H S	SP24	0099	0.100
0945	Harlowton Elem	SP30	0945	0.679
0946	Harlowton H S	SP30	0946	0.321
0487	Helena Elem	SP30	0487	3.500
0488	Helena H S	SP35	0488	0.050
0584	Missoula H S	SP30	0584	1.502
1199	Ronan Elem	SP30	1199	1.000
0481	St Ignatius K-12 Schools	SP30	0481	1.000
0807	Trout Creek Elem	SP35	0807	0.200
9707	Yellowstone/W Carbon Coop	SP31	9707	1.000